DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 414 928 IR 056 786

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TITLE Patterns of Use for the Bryn Mawr Reviews.
PUB DATE 1997-04-00
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Conference on Scholarly Communication and Technology (Atlanta, GA, April 24-25, 1997); see IR 056 774.
AVAILABLE FROM Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Web site: http://www.arl.org/scomm/scat/
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cost Effectiveness; *Cost Indexes; *Costs; *Electronic Journals; Higher Education; Printed Materials; Publications; *Scholarly Journals; Use Studies; Users (Information)
IDENTIFIERS Bryn Mawr College PA; Electronic Resources; Gopher

ABSTRACT

Bryn Mawr Reviews (BMR) produces two electronic review journals, "Bryn Mawr Classical Review," (BMCR) which also comes out in paper and "Bryn Mawr Medieval Review" (BMMR). BMR has two sets of users: subscribers and gopher hitters. Analysis of the monthly gopher reports has concentrated on the hitters rather than the hits; analysis of total users shows that use has leveled off at a peak of about 3800 users a month. Subscriptions to the electronic journals continue to grow at a rate of 5% per quarter, though there are considerable seasonal fluctuations. In terms of progress and cost recovery, progress is satisfactory but cost recovery is still uncertain. BMCR is growing at the rate of 30% a year. About half the costs of BMCR goes for producing the paper version. A possible reduction in costs besides elimination of the paper version and automatic mark-up is a "fast-track" system whereby the review never leaves the Internet. The great advantage for the reviewer is that this cuts publication time by a month; the disadvantage is that the reviewer is asked to do some simple mark-up on the text before sending it. Seven charts show statistics. (AEF)

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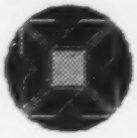

Conference Organized by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

at Emory University
April 24-25, 1997

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Session #4 Patterns of Usage

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Patterns of Use for the Bryn Mawr Reviews

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Historical Background

Bryn Mawr Reviews (BMR) produces two electronic review journals *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (BMCR), which also comes out in paper and was started at the end of 1990 and *Bryn Mawr Medieval Review* (BMMR), started in 1993. After about two years of activity BMMR became dormant and toward the end of 1996 both location and management were shifted [1]; since then it has become tremendously active, at one point even surpassing BMCR in its monthly output.[2] The comparisons below should be considered with this in mind.

Data

We have two sets of users: subscribers and gopher hitters.[3] As data from the former we have subscription lists, which are constantly updated, and periodic surveys that we have conducted; for the latter we have monthly reports of gopher hits and gopher hitters (but not what the hitters

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hit). In considering this data our two main questions have been: how are we doing; how can we afford to keep doing it.

A. Gopher Reports

Our analysis of the monthly gopher reports has concentrated on the hitters rather than the hits. After experimenting rather fruitlessly in 1995 with microanalysis of the data from the Netherlands and Germany hitter by hitter month by month for a year, we decided to collect only the following monthly figures:

total # users

total by address (country, edu, com etc.)

list of top hits (those reviews that received 15+ hits/month and are over a year old[4])

list of top hitters (those who use the system 30+/month).

Analysis of the total users shows that use has levelled off at a peak of about 3800 users a month (see appendix). With a second full year of gopher use to study we can see the seasonal fluctuation more easily. The one area of growth seems to be non-English foreign sites. If we compare the top hitters in the first ten months of 1995 with the comparable period in 1996 we find that the total increased only 5% but the total number of non-English heavy users increased 120%. Three countries were among the heavy users in both 1995 and 1996 (France, Germany, Netherlands); two appeared only in 1995 (South Africa, Taiwan) and eight only in 1996 (Brazil, Italy, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Venezuela).

Chart 1: BMCR/BMMR Top Hitters (30+ hits a month)

	US	English	Non-English	Total
1995	47	8	5	60
1996	42	10	11	63

In terms of number of total users from 1995 to 1996 there was an overall increase of 10.8%, though the increase among US users was only 9.1%. Conversely, most foreign countries if anything showed a marked increase in total use over the ten months of 1996 vs 1995 (see appendix): Argentina 16 to 27, Australia 542 to 684, Brazil 64 to 165, Denmark 80 to 102, Spain 107 to 197, Greece 41to 80, Ireland 50 to 69, Israel 89 to 108, Italy 257 to 359, Japan 167 to 241, Korea 26 to 40, Netherlands 273 to 315, Portugal 16 to 26, Russia 9 to 27, (former) USSR 13 to 20, and South Africa 63 to 88. On the other hand, Iceland went from 22 to 8, Malaysia from 30 to 21, Mexico from 68 to 56, Sweden from 307 to 250, and Taiwan from 24 to 14. Also, among US users there was a large drop in edu from 7073 to 5962 and a corresponding rise in net from 1570 to 4118, perhaps because faculty members are now using commerical providers for home access.[5]

In the analysis of top hits a curious pattern emerges: BMMR starts out with many more top hits despite there being a much smaller number of reviews (about 15% of BMCR's number) but toward the end of 1995 the pattern shifts. BMMR dominates at the beginning but drops when

BMMR becomes inactive.

Chart 3: Favorite Reviews (reviews at least one year old that received 15+ hits/month)

month	BMMR	BMCR
1/95	2	1
2/95	15	11
3/95	10	6
4/95	2	3
5/95	5	5
6/95	16	20
7/95	3	1
8/95	12	14
9/95	41	116
10/95	46	170
1/96	38	81
2/96	14	69
3/96	15	74
4/96	19	50
5/96	6	25
6/96	9	13
7/96	7	16
8/96	8	19
9/96	20	48
10/96	14	54

The shift is easily explained since it occurs about the time BMMR was becoming inactive, but the original high density is still surprising.[6] Likewise medieval books receive noticeably more attention: 32 medieval titles made the top hits list 116 times (avg 3.6) while 81 classical titles made the list only 219 times (avg 2.7), despite including two blockbuster titles, Amy Richlin's *Pornography and Representation* (10x) and John Riddle's *Contraception and Abortion* (14x).[7]. My guess is that medievalists, being more widely dispersed in interests and location, have found the Net more important than have classicists, who are mostly located in a classics department and whose professional work is more circumscribed (and has a longer history).

B. Subscriptions

Subscriptions to the e-journals continue to grow at a rate of 5% per quarter, though there is considerable seasonal fluctuation:

Chart 4: Subscriptions

	3/95	6/95	9/95	3/96	6/96	10/96
BMCR	1072	1067 (-.4%)	1135 (+ 6%)	1253 (+10%)	1273 (+2%)	1317 (+ 3%)
BMMR	711	755 (+ 6%)	865 (+13%)	931 (+ 8%)	964 (+4%)	995 (+ 3%)
joint	568	562 (- 1%)	599 (+ 7%)	672 (+12%)	685 (+2%)	770 (+12%)
total	2351	2384 (+ 1%)	2599 (+ 9%)	2856 (+10%)	2922 (+2%)	3082 (+ 5%)

Looking more broadly we see a steady slowdown in growth of all but the joint subscriptions:

	9/93	9/94	9/95	10/96
BMCR	651	882 (+35%)	1135 (+29%)	1317 (+16%)
BMMR	257	498 (+94%)	865 (+74%)	995 (+15%)
joint	261	460 (+76%)	599 (+30%)	770 (+29%)

If we look at the individual locations, we find again that while the US subscriptions continue to grow, they are becoming steadily less of the whole, going from 77% of the total in 1993 to 68% in 1996. English-speaking foreign countries have remained about the same percentage of the whole; it is non-English speaking foreign contries that have shown the greatest increase, going from 4% of the total in 1993 to 13% of the total in 1996.

Chart 5: BMCR Subscribers

	1993	1994	1995	1996
total	730	1019	1130	1349
edu	529	701	703	779
com	22	44	72	103
gov	3	6	4	4
mil	2	2	2	2
org	5	6	7	12
net	3	5	8	17
US total	564 (77%)	764 (75%)	796 (70%)	917 (68%)
foreign total	154	254	332	428
ca	58	87	106	114
uk	31	45	57	77
au	21	33	38	43
nz	4	6	7	6
za	8	12	14	18
ca/uk/au/nz/za	122 (17%)	183 (18%)	222 (20%)	258 (19%)
non-English	32 (4%)	71 (7%)	110 (10%)	170 (13%)

de	5	11	16	27
nl	7	10	16	24
ie	1	4	5	5
fi	3	8	9	12
br	0	2	2	2
fr	1	4	7	9
es	0	0	1	3
it	2	4	7	17
hu	0	2	2	2
ve	1	1	1	1
se	3	4	6	7
gr	0	1	3	8
il	2	6	11	14
dk	1	1	1	0
no	3	4	4	4
kr	0	0	1	1
be	0	2	5	7
us	0	2	2	4
jp	1	2	3	4
ch	1	2	4	12
pt	0	0	1	1
at	0	0	1	2
hk	0	1	1	1
my	0	0	1	1
tr	0	0	1	1
pl	0	0	0	2

C. Subscriber Surveys

As opposed to the gopher stats, which give breadth but little depth, our surveys offer the opportunity for deeper study of our users but at the expense of breadth. We cannot survey our subscribers too often or they will not respond.[8] A further limitation is that we felt we could not survey those who take both BMCR and BMMR, a significant number, without skewing the results since many subscribers lean heavily toward one journal or the other and the journals are significantly different in some ways. So far we have conducted five surveys:

1) a 20 question survey to BMCR subscribers November 1995

2) a 21 question survey to BMMR subscribers in February 1996

3) a 2 question survey to all subscribers in October 1996[9]

4) a 15 question survey to all BMCR reviewers whose e-mail addresses we knew in January 1997.

5) a 2 question survey to those who have cancelled subscriptions in the past year (March 1997).

Here is the subscriber profile as revealed in the surveys:

	BMCR	BMMR
male	72.3%	50.1%
female	25.3	44.8
AB	5.5	9.6
ABD	12.8	18.0
PhD	66.6	49.3

faculty	65.0	44.2
adjunct, research	7.0	6.5
grad student	15.1	23.7
undergrad	.8	2.3
check e-mail daily	90.3	85.9
read review on screen	66.8	63.9
print immediately	6.5	5.9
read on screen to decide	24.5	27.3
never/rarely delete w/o reading	83.1	85.4
made printed copy sometimes/often	56.9	51.9
copies on disk sometimes/often	51.7	50.7
have used gopher	42.0	15.8
reviewed for journal	25.1	9.6
heard reference to journal	70.0	31.0
finish a few reviews	42.0	19.7
finish many/most reviews	53.5	64.8
finish almost all	3.1	13.2
review useful for teaching	53.8	41.1
review useful for research	87.2	78.9
willing to pay $5 subscription	66.8	50.1

Many of the differences are easily explained by the chequered history of BMMR or by the differing natures of the two readerships.[10] I doubt many will be surprised that medievalists are more often female and less often faculty. The paucity of reader-reviewers of BMMR reflects the paucity of BMMR reviews. To me the most surprising statistic is how few of subscribers to either journal have used gopher.

The key question of course is willingness to pay for subscription, and with that in mind we did some correlation studies for the BMCR survey, first seeing with what variables there was a correlation with a willingness to pay $5 for a subscription. We found positive correlation with

ever found review useful for teaching (.0004 likelihood of a chance correlation)

ever found review useful for research (.00006)

ever hear a reference to BMCR (.00001)

ever written a review for BMCR (.00089)

Some further correlations were found:

start to read many or most reviews// heard a reference to BMCR (.00014)

willing to review// heard a reference to BMCR (.00003)

get paper BMCR// have written review (.00003)

have written review// will write in future (.0000)

will write in future// library gets BMCR (.00007)

PhD// willing to review (.00001).

A follow-up two question survey done in October 1996 asked whether subscribers would prefer to pay for e-mail subscription, or to receive advertisements from publishers or to cancel. 14% preferred to pay, 82% to receive advertisements and 4% to cancel.

Our most recent survey, of those who had for one reason or another dropped from the list of subscribers, revealed that almost a third were no longer valid addresses and so were not true cancellations. Of those who responded almost half (40, 44%) of the unsubscriptions were only temporary. The reason for cancellation was rarely the quality of the review.

Chart 7: BMCR Unsubscriber Survey (those who unsubscribed 1/96-2/97)

317 total: 103 address no longer valid; 91 responses

identity

15 unaffiliated with academic institution

46 faculty (4 retired, 9 adjunct or research)

7 librarians

8 students (2 undergraduates)

7 other

reasons (faculty # in parenthesis)

2 never subscribed (1)

2 never meant to unsubscribe (1)

16 unsubscribed from old, subscribed to new address (14)

15 suspended subscription while away (9+1)

22 decided reviews not sufficiently relevant to interests (6+2)

2 decided review quality not high enough (+1)

11+3 too much e-mail (6+3)

7+1 no longer have time to read reviews (+2)

7+1 other (5 shifted to BMR, 1 to BMCR, mistake) (4+1)

question	unaffiliated	faculty	librarian	student	ot
not relevant	8	6+2	1	2	2
too much mail	2	7	-	2	-
no time	4	+2	-	-	1
total	14	13+4	1	4	3

Conclusions

If we return to our two questions: progress and cost recovery, we can see that our progress is satisfactory but cost-recovery is still uncertain.

BMCR is growing at the rate of 30% a year.[11] The major American Classics organization (The American Philological Association) has a membership of about 3,000 members and so one may estimate the total world population of Classicists as somewhere between 7,000 and 10,000. If half of them have access to computers, BMCR presently reaches somewhere between 22% and 32% of its total market. At its present rate of growth, it will saturate its market in five years. It is much more difficult to estimate the total world market for BMMR, but it is certainly greater than that for BMCR, so with its present growth rate of perhaps 30%[12] it will take somewhat longer to reach saturation.

BMCR costs are about $4,000/year for over 700 pages of reviews. About half the cost goes for producing the paper version and we anticipate costs of between $1,500 and $2,000 per year for preparing reviews for the Web.[13] Uncompensated editorial time averages 34 hours/month. So, total out-of-pocket expenses could be as high as $6,000 if the paper version continues and if mark-up continues to be done by hand. A third possible reduction in costs besides elimination of the paper version and automatic mark-up is a "fast-track" system whereby the review never leaves the net: it is e-mailed to the editor who sends it to a member of the editorial board and when the two have made changes it is sent back to the reviewer for approval and then published on the net. The great advantage for the reviewer is that this cuts publication time by a month; the disadvantage is that the reviewer is asked to do some simple mark-up on the text before sending it.

Possible revenue sources include: advertising, subscriptions and institutional support. As we have seen, our subscribers much prefer receiving advertising to paying for a subscription, but we have no idea how successful we will be in attracting advertising.[14] At the Conference, Hal Varian suggested we try to arrange something with Amazon Books, and we will. We will not consider charging for subscriptions until BMCR is on the Web; at that point we could charge for timely delivery of the review, perhaps several months before universal access. We also want to wait for wide acceptance of a simple electronic cash transfer system. Institutional support seems to us the most obvious way to cover costs since the College gets considerable exposure for what seems to us a small cost.

BMCR/BMMR total gopher users

	96/1	96/2	96/3	96/4	96/5	96/6	96/7	96/8	9
Total	3622	3809	3778	3510	2887	2600	2687	2893	3
#	1015	1216	1235	1123	944	819	843	873	9
ae	1	1		1		1			
ai		1							
am			1						
ar		5	2	3	1	2	1	2	
arpa	4	3	1	6	2	2	2	1	
at	14	9	13	10	10	10	8	11	
au	67	52	72	71	72	61	51	82	
aw					1				
bb									
be	12	15	11	8	6	7	14	10	
bg	1						1		
bh							1	1	
bm			1	1					
bn			1					1	
br	13	10	17	10	17	18	17	25	
ca	165	154	153	144	101	90	82	100	
ch	13	7	5	8	10	7	11	12	
cl	3	2	2	1	2	4	1	3	
cn				1	1	1	1	2	
co			1	1	2				
com	503	466	453	362	322	316	329	356	
cr	2		1	1	1	1	2		
cs									
cy		1							
cz	3	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	
de	84	65	71	60	58	61	56	60	
dk	11	17	8	7	7	4	8	13	
do		1	1	1				1	
dz									
ec									
edu	684	742	650	716	503	430	460	461	
ee	3	2	2	1	4	2	1		
eg				2					
es	13	13	22	22	22	15	19	23	
fi	27	23	23	18	13	9	23	14	
fj	36	1							
fr		31	34	32	26	27	28	23	
gb		1	1				1		
ge	1								
gi									
gov	52	60	52	49	43	29	29	29	
gr	11	12	6	5	7	8	7	7	
gt			1						
gu									
hk	1	4	2	2	1	1		2	
hr	2	1	2	1	3	3		2	
hu	6	1	3	1	2		5	6	
id		2		1	2				
ie	7	9	6	8	9	4	4	3	
il	11	11	18	15	7	7	8	10	
in				1				1	
int						1			
is	6	4	2	2	1	1		1	
it	37	32	34	35	33	23	34	41	
jm						1			
jo									

jp	31	31	23	24	16	25	20	16	3
kr	2	3	5	7	4	3	4	1	4
kw	1								
lb									1
lt	2	1		1		1	1		
lu	2	3	1				1		
lv	1	2	1						1
ma	1	1							
md						1			
mil	24	27	20	20	18	14	20	9	1
mo	1								
mt		1		2	2				
mx	7	6	10	3	6	7	3	4	8
my	2	3	2	5	2	1	2	1	1
na						1			
net	381	439	480	397	319	316	326	406	5
nl	43	38	23	37	28	24	33	30	3
no	24	18	22	16	15	9	10	12	1
nz	10	9	14	16	10	9	10	18	1
org	40	34	42	42	43	37	33	28	3
pa									
pe	1		1	1		1	1	1	1
ph			2	1		1		2	3
pk			1						
pl	5	4	3		3	7	3	1	6
pt	3	2	2	2	3	1	2	3	4
ro	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	2
ru	1	1	2	3	1	3	3	4	6
se	40	31	20	23	21	17	21	25	2
sg	5	4	2	4	4	4	2	2	5
si		3	3	1	1	2	3	2	
sk				2				1	1
su	3	1	2	3	2	2	2	1	4
sz									1
th	1	1	1		1	1	3	2	2
tr	7	2	4	2	1	1	1	3	2
tw	2	1	3		1	3	2	1	1
ua	1			1				1	1
uk	100	83	90	82	82	92	82	88	7
us	60	72	81	68	61	42	39	43	6
uy	2	1		1		1	1	1	
ve						1	1	1	1
ws									
wst	1								
za	9	8	7	13	8	6	9	8	5

FOOTNOTES:

[1] It has as of May 7 become *The Medieval Review* (TMR).

[2] The output by month (4/95-3/97) is:

bmmr	10	17	5	8	4	3	5	11	6	7	4	6	1	4	1	6	6	9	8
bmcr	15	14	19	13	11	29	26	17	27	12	14	15	37	7	12	19	17	28	14

[3] Since May 7, BMMR (=TMR) has been on the Web, and this will eventually provide valuable data to compare with the BMCR gopher data.

[4] Naturally, new reviews are visited often; we are trying to isolate those of enduring value.

[5] Likewise, mil(itary) dropped from 310 to 186; gov(ernment) from 819 to 409.

[6] The explosive growth in 9/95 and 10/95 was only temporary.

[7] The difference would be even more pronounced had I not excluded books that appeared on the list only once. In 1996 the gap virtually disappears: 31 medieval titles (total number of titles 53) made the list 126 times (avg. 4.1) while 93 classical titles (total number of titles 169) made the list 360 times (avg. 3.9).

[8] As is our response rate is only in the 30-40% range.

[9] Unfortunately the survey was worded as if only for BMCR subscribers, but even so the response rate was about 35%.

[10] We found similar differences in a pilot comparison of qualitative differences in the two journals done by two advanced graduate students (one a Classicist one a Medievalist) in the summer of 1995. They concluded that the major differences stem from the scholarly orientation of either discipline not from their media (i.e., Classicists criticize at a microscopic level, assume in-depth acquaintance with a given text). The reviews are longer and the number of typographical errors is much greater in BMMR but other differences seemed to be personal (tone of the review, footnotes and additional bibliography, organization, amount of direct quotation).

[11] Combined BMCR and joint figures= 912 for 1993, 1342 for 1994 (+47%), 1734 for 1995 (+29%) and 2264 for 1996 (+30%).

[12] Combined BMMR and joint figures= 518 for 1993, 958 for 1994 (+85%), 1464 for 1995 (+53%) and 1765 for 1996 (+21%). We have already seen an increase since BMMR relocated (3/97 = 1985, c.30% annually) and we may expect a considerable bump after official unveiling of TMR at the annual conference in May (and the introduction of the website).

[13] BMMR has found it takes 35 minutes on average to SGML a review.

[14] So far only Princeton University Press (of the eight contacted) has signed up for e-advertising.

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